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RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION

Written statement* submitted by North-South XXI, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31

[20 December 1999]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, as received from the submitting non-governmental organization.

Racism and discrimination in the developed countries

1. In the developed European countries, racism and racial discrimination are the subject of discussions and analyses and in some cases result in the establishment of bodies such as the "Study Group on Discrimination", set up in 1999 by the Government of France.

2. However, the praiseworthy effort to "observe" discrimination and automatically condemn it should not be confused with the effort to actually "treat" it.

3. In the European countries as a whole, latent racism is an obstacle to everyday life in many ways (access to employment and housing, refusal to do business, relations with administrations or employers) and arises in political life, in particular with regard to candidatures for elections.

The bodies responsible for action to combat discrimination themselves attach little importance to trade unions, associations to combat racism or the victims of discrimination themselves, as if their objective was simply to obtain extra support for their political manoeuvres.

4. The Commission on Human Rights cannot disregard discriminatory and racist practices taking place in the most developed countries, which proclaim themselves the universal guarantors of human rights. It must not be satisfied with legislation condemning racism and discrimination, but must take into consideration court decisions, often lenient towards offences based on racism, and the actual situation in societies rife with discrimination and xenophobia.

In accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 52/111 of 12 December 1997, the Commission on Human Rights must "formulate concrete recommendations to further ... measures" in the European industrial countries where racism and xenophobia, although not "open", remain an everyday reality.